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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004085

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ETRD](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ/TURKEY: ZEBARI VISIT SUCCESSFUL

REF: ANKARA 2480

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: GOT sources and the Iraqi Embassy here characterized Iraqi FonMin Zebari's July 3-5 visit as very positive. The Turkish MFA told us Zebari said Iraq will get tough on the PKK, and that Turkey and Iraq had agreed in principle on a deal to open two additional border gates. While some officials here wish Zebari had been more forthcoming in his press appearances, they confirmed that the GOT will maintain a positive public line on Iraq. The Iraqi DCM told us that Iraqi press play on the visit was positive. He added that he believes the Iraqi Kurds may be moderating their stance on the Kirkuk issue, and related his frustrations with the Iraqi MFA and his own embassy staff. End summary.

12. (C) Iraqi FonMin Zebari had a successful July 3-5 visit to Turkey. In Ankara, he met President Sezer, PM Erdogan, and FonMin Gul. He also inaugurated the new Iraqi Consulate in Istanbul on July 5 before leaving Turkey for talks in Greece. GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Celikkol told the DCM July 4 that the tone was extremely positive, and that the two sides had reached a "breakthrough" in the standoff over opening additional border gates. The foreign ministers agreed in principle to open a second gate at Sinora (5 kms from the Habur Gate) within a year, and a third gate at Ovakoy (at the far western edge of the Turkey-Iraq border) within three years. According to Celikkol, the Iraqi and Turkish transportation ministers will sign a protocol on this deal in the coming weeks.

13. (C/REL USA, GBR, CAN, AUS) Celikkol reported that Zebari twice pronounced that "we will be tough on the PKK," and that the names of 100 top PKK terrorists will be given to the Iraqi Interior Ministry for action. Zebari told GOT leaders that Iraq was ready for both trilateral (U.S.-Turkey-Iraq) and bilateral talks with Turkey on the PKK. Additionally, Zebari confirmed that the Saddam-era extradition treaty between Turkey and Iraq was still in effect. (NOTE: We will seek to clarify this. In May the Turkish MFA had informed us that the GOI had declared that the Turkey-Iraq Legal Assistance Treaty did not provide an adequate basis to extradite PKK terrorists to Turkey, and had proposed that the GOT and GOI negotiate a new extradition treaty (reftel). END

NOTE.)

¶4. (C) Celikkol's deputy, Fazli Corman, told us July 5 that, while quite pleased with the substance of Zebari's talks here, Turkish officials wish that the Iraqi FonMin had been more forthcoming in his numerous media appearances.

(COMMENT: Zebari was polished but generally vague in his interviews here. On Kirkuk, he peeved some Turks by speaking out against outside interference in the issue. Overall press coverage of the visit, however, was positive. END COMMENT.) We reminded Corman of the complexities of Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish politics (Zebari is a senior KDP leader), and Corman confirmed that the GOT will stick to a strong positive public line in its Iraq policy. However, he warned, absent some movement on crucial issues such as the PKK, it will be hard to maintain this line. Corman confirmed that Turkish FonMin Gul should go to Iraq "soon."

¶5. (C/REL USA, GBR, CAN, AUS) We also called on Iraqi DCM Jawary for a readout on the visit. Unfortunately, Jawary had not attended the substantive meetings in Ankara, and the Iraqi Ambassador was already en route to Tehran for the Iraqi Neighbors meeting. Jawary told us his ambassador had also characterized the meetings as successful, and noted the Iraqi press had reported positively on the visit.

¶6. (C/REL USA, GBR, CAN, AUS) Jawary, a secular Sunni Arab, related his impression that the Iraqi Kurds had come to a new realization about the sensitivity of the Kirkuk issue and its potential to create even more instability in Iraq. He thinks that the Kurds may be willing to be flexible about postponing the constitutionally mandated 2007 referendum on the city's

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final status (Jawary stressed that this was his informal reading of the situation and was not/not Iraq's official position). Jawari remains frustrated by the lack of support from Baghdad. He noted that the Embassy still has no classified communication tools and that he receives no guidance, such as talking points, from the Iraqi MFA. He added that most of his embassy staff are affiliated with Iraq's political parties and are ineffective.

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